**Pole vault champ faces confidence crisis**

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Reigning Olympic pole vault champion Steve Hooker says he's lost his confidence six months out from the London Games and won't be competing in the remainder of the domestic season.  
He is set to miss next month's Australian Olympic selection trials in Melbourne as well as this weekend's Perth Track Classic.  
The Australian athletic team's national captain blames his predicament on the knee injury that caused him problems in 2011.  
"The confidence I require to stand at the end of the runway and then charge down, land my pole and soar almost six metres into the air has left me for the time being," Hooker has written in News Ltd newspapers.  
"I'm certain it is only a temporary situation I can resolve over the coming months and make it to London to defend my Olympic crown in August.  
He concedes missing the Olympic trials is a big risk, but says "I feel with three months of training under my belt I will be better prepared in May to take on that challenge.  
"I'm nervous because I desperately want to defend my crown in London. I want to be there with my team-mates. Thankfully, I believe it's achievable."

The 30-year-old, who until recently held every major title open to him - the Commonwealth Games, Continental Cup, world championship, world indoor championship and the Olympic Games - has described how his "auto-pilot" has left him.  
"To be at your best a pole-vaulter's mind must be clear. If you have numerous calculations going through your head on the runway and through the take-off, it just doesn't happen.  
"You need to have everything on auto-pilot. Unfortunately right now, there is lot going on in my mind.  
"The aim is to stand at the end of the runway and be confident that you're going to hit that mark exactly four metres out from the take-off box, just like a long-jumper has to hit the board on the precise spot.  
"The problem is that if we take off 20cm too close or 20cm too far out the outcome isn't just a foul like for the long-jumpers, you can do serious damage to yourself."  
Athletics Australia's high performance manager Eric Hollingsworth told Reuters: "He's just having technical issues.  
"It can change overnight or it can take a month to work out.  
"He just needs some breathing space to work out these things and get through it."